1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Ventre robes. A child's quilled robe (Museum specimen 50–1751) agrees in general with the Arapaho style of ornamentation,[1] and is probably more or less representative of the Gros Ventre type. The style is similar to that of the quill-work on the Arapaho bag shown in the "Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History" (Vol. XVIII, Plate XVI). Seventeen red quilled lines pass across this robe. Four spaces, two on the lines and two at the ends, are green instead of red on each line. Originally, small green-dyed plumes seem to have been attached here also; these have now almost disappeared. At the four green spaces on the lowest line, pendants are attached. These each consist of a small loop wound with green quills, and of two thongs wound with red quills. At the ends of the thongs are small cylinders of tin from out of which issues a tuft of dyed horsehair. The seventeen embroidered lines do not stretch entirely across the robe to its edge, but occupy a rectangular area including the greater part of its somewhat irregular surface. Certain Arapaho robes are described as having been embroidered with seventeen such parallel lines, to which a group of three was added at the lower edge, where pendants were attached. An Arapaho child's robe in the Museum collections is almost identical with this in style. The ornamental spaces on the red quilled lines differ somewhat, and there are eighteen instead of seventeen lines; but the general construction and appearance are strikingly similar, even to the pendant attachments. Dr. Clark Wissler's illustration [2] of a small Sioux robe serves to give a very close idea of the present piece. Like the Arapaho robe, this Sioux one has eighteen lines. Dr. Wissler makes the point that among the Sioux such red-line embroidered robes were distinctive of women and girls; but among the Arapaho the typical robe of men is said to have been embroidered with yellow or white lines. The Field Columbian Museum has on exhibition Cree, Crow, and Sioux children's robes ornamented with from seventeen to twenty lines and with hoof pendants at the bottom.

The Gros Ventre have now entirely abandoned the use of embroidered tent-ornaments such as are still quite common among the Arapaho. A single dilapidated partial specimen was obtained, shown in Fig. 4. This is very similar to the Arapaho tent-ornaments.[3] The full set consisted of a larger, round quill-embroidered piece of skin sewed to the back of the top of a tent and called kaiⁿbiitᵃⁿ ("round embroidery"), four similar but smaller ornaments put on the sides of the tent lower down, and pendants attached to the upper flaps or ears of the tent. The circular embroidered ornaments had buffalo-tails or strips of buffalo-fur, and quill-wound pendant thongs with hoofs and loops at their ends, hanging from the middle.

[1] Compare Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVIII, Part I, pp. 29, 33, 65.
[2] Ibid., Vol. XVIII, Part III, Fig. 81.
[3] Ibid., Vol. XVIII, Part I, pp. 61–63.

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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each of which has a ceremony of its own rivalling that of the other (respectively the war-dance and the star-dance), compete in a horse-race, with the agreement that the beaten party is to put up the crazy-lodge. It does not seem that this is a common procedure. 796 616

The Gros Ventre abandoned their dances much earlier than the Arapaho, and almost nothing of the organization remains now, except a memory. It is somewhat difficult to procure precise details of the procedure, especially in the older dances. In great part, the regalia used have also perished, and it has been possible to secure only a very few pieces. These show, as do the descriptions given by the Indians, that the objects and decorations used are quite similar to those of the Arapaho. The distinction of several degrees purely of honor within each ceremony, which is so characteristic of the Arapaho age-dances, is also found in the Gros Ventre, though it seems that the distinctions made and the number of degrees are not quite so elaborate. This is evidenced, not only by the fact that few degrees are described by the Gros Ventre, a fact which might be due to their longer disuse of the ceremonies, but also by circumstances such as the one that certain regalia, which in the Arapaho dog-dance are worn only by the members of the second and third highest degrees, are among the Gros Ventre the common regalia of all participants; only the highest degree of the Arapaho being retained by the Gros Ventre as distinct. 796 178 [171]

The Gros Ventre call their entire ceremonial organizations benaa"wu, a dialectic form of the Arapaho Iayaa"wu, and, like it, probably meaning "all the lodges." The members of the age-societies are called beniinen, commonly translated at the present day as "soldiers," etymologically probably "all-men," or "all-(?)-men." 796 561

The ceremonies of the Gros Ventre benaa"wu, with the age-dances given in order from youth to old age, are the following: —

Açeiha"w"	Sacrifice-lodge,[1] sun-dance
	Star-dance, partial preliminary
Nôuhâ"w"	Fly-lodge, first dance
Haha"tyâ"w"	Crazy-lodge, second dance
Nôuhâ"w"	Kit-fox lodge, third dance
Hotibyâ"w"	Dog-lodge, fourth dance
Nanâ"nahâ"w"	Tomahawk-lodge, fifth dance
Blitahâ"wu"	Drum (?) lodge, sixth (?) dance
Benuxteâ"w"	Buffalo(?) dance, women's dance.

The members of these successive age-ceremonies are called respectively

[1] Once translated "looked-at-lodge."

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Recently these two bodies of young men performing respectively the star-dance and the war-dance have supplanted entirely the older, more numerous age-companies. In late years they have taken the place of the age-companies in the ceremonies connected with the erection of the sun-dance lodge. There was then considerable rivalry between them, and it is said that a member of either company who should take part with the other would be abused by his companions, and perhaps have his clothes torn. Recently also the two groups have had certain social functions, which among most Plains tribes are in the hands of tribal bodies or societies. They had charge of the moving of the camp-circle and of locating it. If a man disapproved of their selection, or pitched his tent elsewhere than they directed, they overturned it, and perhaps destroyed his property or killed his horses. If buffalo were seen and others than themselves went ahead and killed them, these two companies cut both the meat and the skin of such game into small pieces.

The Fly-Dance.

The fly-dance (nouba^{n}w^{n}), the first of the dances, seems to have been regarded in some ways as preliminary to the series, rather than part of it, somewhat like the Arapaho kit-fox and star dances. The dancers were called noubän ("flies"). They were young men, sometimes described as boys. Apparently they were of an age where many or all of them were still unmarried, for no mention of their wives participating in the ceremony is made. The duration of the dance is not quite sure. It is said, like all the other ceremonies, to have continued four days; but another informant gave one day as the length of the ceremony. It is not clear whether or not a lodge was erected for the ceremony. In any case, however, the dance was performed outside of the camp-circle. A prominent feature seems to have been the food cooked by the relatives of the young dancers, and brought to the dancing-place. In distinction from what occurred in the other dances, "grandfathers" were secured very easily for this ceremony, which goes to show the light regard in which it was held by the elder men. The old men of the tribe are said to have gone out to the dancing-place, and, on being selected by groups of dancers as "grandfathers," to have accepted at once.

The dancing went on during the day. The dancers were practically naked; and their entire body, as customary in Arapaho and Gros Ventre ceremonies, was painted over. A common style of painting, or perhaps the characteristic one of the dance, was red, with a white stripe on the face and another on the belly. The pledger of the dance (yenouhuxtj^{t}; Arapaho, yanahut^{t}) was painted yellow, with corresponding black stripes. After the

l: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

796 As in the other ceremonies, the dancers were painted over the entire
302 body. It does not seem that the long-continued painting of the Arapaho
562 dog-dance, in connection with which the relationship between the dancers' wives and "grandfathers" found its chief expression in this tribe, existed among the Gros Ventre. The women, however, took considerable part in the ceremony as in the others, being painted with their husbands, sitting in the lodge and singing, and at times putting on their regalia; whereupon the men took hold of the ends of the regalia, and their wives led them about.

796 The complete disintegration and disuse of the old ceremonial life of
178 the Gros Ventre is shown by the fact that not a single dog-dance object belonging to an ordinary dancer has been collected. It is therefore the more fortunate that the Museum has been able to complete, through Dr. Clark Wissler, a valuable set of the regalia of the highest degree of this dance. This unique group of specimens is shown in Figs. 38, 39, and 40, and Plate XIII.

796 The coat (Fig. 38) is in shape an ordinary deer-skin shirt. At the neck
292 is an edging of red flannel. On the upper arms are two short, transverse bars of white quill-embroidery, the quills laid on in diagonal zigzag stitch. At each of the sides, at the bottom of the shirt, hang two long, pointed strips, as customary on men's shirts, — the legs of the animal decoratively used. Under the armpits are similar shorter flaps. The two sides of the shirt are open from the bottom to under the arms. These open edges, the hanging strips, the lower border, and the ends of the sleeves, are ornamented with a fringe about an inch long. The lower portion of the shirt for a width of about half a foot, and the hanging strips, are painted yellow. All the remainder of the shirt has been stained brown, apparently over yellow paint. On the two sides there are in this brown area a total of 225 yellow circles about an inch and a half in diameter, which have not been painted over with the brown stain. Each of these circles is edged by white quill-work, and from its centre hangs a mutilated crow-feather by a thong. The edging of the circles is produced by using single quills as threads in an in-and-out rotary stitch. The crow-feathers have the quill broken, in from one to four places, without being severed. The vanes are for the most part considerably disarranged, as if intentionally. At the lower end the feathers are cut off square and the quill is flattened by cutting on two sides, as if to get rid of the lowest part of the vane. The quill is cut in this way so far from its natural base that it is entirely solid. The feathers are simply wrapped against a thong with sinew. The end of the thong projects a little beyond the sinew. The thongs on the outside of the skin average half an inch in length, and are painted yellow. Each passes through a hole in the centre of a yellow circle. Behind this, that is, on the inner side of the shirt, it is

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

796 The Gros Ventre also introduce into the ceremony a thunder symbolism
171 that the Arapaho lack, or have in a much less developed form. The lightning symbol on the centre pole, from which water can be drawn, and the power of the thunder to strike with lightning any dancer who drinks other water than this, evidence this.

Another element special to the Gros Ventre is the introduction of ceremonies relating to war, such as the dramatic performances and the seeing of the approach of the enemy by the pledger.

Features introducing miraculous and sometimes purely personal supernatural powers are apparently quite lacking from the Arapaho ceremony. Among the Gros Ventre there are the raising of the centre pole, the production of water from the centre pole with the crow, the clairvoyance of the pledger as regards the enemy, and the visions of some of the dancers.

In summary, the exact duration and sequence of all events in the Gros Ventre ceremony are not yet clear; the preliminary prairie-chicken tent does not correspond very closely to the Arapaho rabbit-tent; and the connection of the ceremony with the thunder, the introduction of warlike elements, and that of miraculous or personal features, are peculiar, or nearly so, to the Gros Ventre as compared with the Arapaho.

MODERN CEREMONIAL OBJECTS.

778 The recent ceremonial objects of the Gros Ventre are somewhat different
171 from those of the Arapaho. The Arapaho were deeply affected by the ghost-dance movement, more, it is said, than any other tribe; and many
[668 of their modern religious regalia have a distinct character of their own.
177] The Gros Ventre received the ghost-dance from the Arapaho, but it seems to have taken little hold of them. The only distinctive ghost-dance objects seen or obtained were two small hoops and a few balls, all of which
177 resemble Arapaho types. The chief modern dance-ceremony of the Gros
778 Ventre, the only one performed at present, is the grass or war dance ob-
796 tained from the Sioux, and evidently a modification of the widespread Omaha dance upon which the Arapaho crow-dance is also based. This dance has in recent years been still further modified, until its character
● [178] now is very similar to that of the crow-dance. The regalia used in this dance at present are very individual, usually crude, and almost always stylistically degenerate. The delicate character and distinct style of the majority of modern Arapaho dance-objects are lacking.

171 The treatment of feathers in such objects is quite different among the
778 Gros Ventre and Arapaho. The Gros Ventre rarely ornament their feathers
287

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

dried and seasoned, then pulverized, and used in a liquid. It was also used mixed with other things.

The Pipe keepers, and co-keepers, ex-keepers and ex-co-keepers, were immune and could handle it. But if others touched the plant or powder they would be seized at once with fits which only an actual or retired keeper or co-keeper could cure by working on him and blowing some of the powder on him. Some Gros Ventres, however, such as old Deafie, did not believe that wild parsley caused fits, but many cases are reported. One man, for instance, in recent times carried some in his hands to a dance, and during the dance got a fit and it took one of the ex-co-keepers to bring him out of it. Another man used wild parsley as a medicine in doctoring. Each participant in the Crazy Lodge used it. But originally its use was confined to Pipe keepers and co-keepers (see p. 52).

If one were scratched with an arrow that had been dipped in wild parsley infusion he would suffer spasms, fits and acute agony and would not live till morning. Such a poisoned arrow was tied by each Crazy Lodge dancer to his bow, apparently as a silent threat to enforce obedience and respect by the people during the lodge rites, but was thrown away after the dance was over.* These poisoned arrows were not used at any other time than the Crazy Lodge; never for instance, in Gros Ventre wars or raids on enemies.

Seasonal Rites

The three annual seasonal rites were in the olden days the major ceremonial events in Gros Ventre life according to The Boy, Thick and older informants. No vow was necessary to hold them. They were never omitted. They had to be performed. The seasonal rites have long since been given up. They were last carried out sometime in the late 1860's or early 1870's, while The Boy's father, Lame Bull, was keeper.

The three seasonal rites were held in the spring, fall and winter respectively. About April the various Gros Ventre bands, which

*Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 207-08 regarding poisoned arrow.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

175 disappearance of the buffalo, the population was officially recorded
161 as being 970. By 1895 it had been reduced to 596.[19] At this low
ebb, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was still a
[554] strong feeling among the Gros Ventres against the white man's
dress; as of old, a man's wealth and standing still was measured
[178] by the number of horses he owned. Nevertheless the ceremonial
aspects of their culture, already on the wane before that decade,
had practically disappeared.

[19] Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883-1915, pp. 101, 188.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

224 before the buffalo got out of range. Only one such run a day was made and, although all hunters had an equal opportunity, so to speak, since no one of them started before the others, the greatest chance of success lay with the man mounted on the fastest horse. Incidentally the gun never supplanted the bow and arrow as a weapon of the chase because, for a mounted hunter riding close to the game, the bow and arrow was just as effective and even easier to use than the gun which had to be reloaded and which was difficult to aim accurately when traveling at a fast pace. Succeeding generations of Gros Ventre boys were trained in archery right up to, and including, the time of the disappearance of the buffalo.

[178] Our informants stated that while the surround was sometimes resorted to, the chase or run, as described above, was the method preferred by the Gros Ventres. The old-fashioned methods of impounding and driving over the cliff were seemingly abandoned by the Gros Ventres in the 1830's. It was stated that an old man, who died at the age of 98 in 1920, witnessed the last big impounding at the head of the Teton River when he was twelve years old.[8] Our oldest informant (b. 1854) knew of these methods only because her grandmother and other older people had told her stories of what they had witnessed. She put it as follows: "When my grandmother was a young woman, the Gros Ventres were very badly off. Only a person here and there would have a horse, and these horses were not the fast kind that can be used in hunting. In fact they did better by building a row of rocks to lead the buffalo into a big corral;[9] or else by having a man covered with a buffalo robe to act as decoy. This man would run forward toward a steep precipice and just at the edge would jump aside while the buffalo following him would go over. The animals which were not crippled in the fall would be shot with bow and arrow. Everybody had to use dogs to drag their stuff as the people moved around; and they cut the lodges in two so the load would not be too heavy for a dog to draw."

[492] 231 The possession of an adequate number of horses, then, seems

[8] Denig, p. 532, confirms this, holding that all the northern plains tribes, except the Assiniboine and Cree, are so well supplied with horses that they do not need to resort to the corral.

[9] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 148–49.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

CHAPTER VI

KINSHIP BEHAVIOR

Much of the more formalized behavior expected between particular categories of relatives among the Gros Ventres has survived the many changes in their economic, political, and religious structure. It is one of the few aspects of their older culture which can be observed as functioning at least partially. Although the economic side of the obligations has had to be reduced markedly under modern conditions, the attitudes accompanying avoidance and joking are still deeply ingrained in those of middle age and in older persons.

All in all, the type of behavior which indicated respect was extended to include by far the greatest number of relationships,—freedom being allowed only between those individuals considered to be related as grandparents and grandchildren, as siblings of the same sex, and as in-laws of opposite sex but of the same generation.

Parents

The parent-child relationship was characterized by a kind of reserve that tabooed any light talk, especially joking about sex or marriage. If the subject were approached in a serious way, however, it could be discussed between parent and child of like sex. A woman could, for instance, go to her divorced or widowed mother and tell her: "So-and-so wants you, will you not go and live with that man?" But she would not think of acting as intermediary in such a proposal to her father.

Throughout life children were supposed to address and to refer to their parents only by relationship terms,[1] never by personal name. Further, a son would be shamed by any incident even remotely connected with sex, in which he was involved, should it be

[1] The kinship terminology given by our informants agrees in detail with that in Kroeber, 1902, p. 9.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

least one horse was included, but no given amount of property was specified nor did bargaining enter into the negotiations.[6] Following the pattern of ostentatious liberality, a man could reflect honor upon himself by giving generously, and one with such a reputation was preferred over a poor or stingy one. Whatever the groom offered was divided among the bride's relatives. As one woman said: "A husband always gave something for his wife, no matter how many wives he acquired, because this is what makes it 'legal.' Then the girl's father and brother divided the presents. If the brother arranged the marriage, he would say to the father 'Here is a horse for you.' And if the father or uncle had been approached by the husband, then they did the same way. Sometimes even the father's sister was given a horse or something else when her niece married."

Although it was not obligatory, a bride's family often provided her with goods to take to her marriage, especially if it were her first one. Singer explained in regard to Coming Daylight: "Her family was well-to-do and showed how much they thought of themselves by giving her a good send-off. You should have seen her going off to her first husband. She was only about ten years old and she looked so tiny leading that big horse. On the horse was a fine fringed saddle and the travois was just piled up with painted parfleshes and other things."

The following account of the marriage of Coming Daylight's daughter shows how the pattern was carried out under changed conditions: "One night when the family returned from a dance they found a letter addressed to the oldest son, Ed, from a man whom he liked, asking for Ed's sister, Gertrude. When his father came in from tending the horses they told him about the proposal and he agreed right away, saying: 'We are still keeping her and she is a big girl. I'm glad this offer has been made.' So a week later they loaded a new buggy with Gertrude's things,—bedding, beds, trunk, sewing machine, etc.,—and her father drove this to the creek where the dance hall was located. Meanwhile Coming Daylight took her daughter to the house of the man who had asked for her and left her there sitting on this man's bed. The groom did not appear at the Grass Dance that evening, even though he

[6] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

585 178 was Keeper of the Crow Belt, as he had taken Gertrude and camped at the Mission. The next morning the couple was married by the priest and Gertrude's father brought the buggy full of goods and gave them all that, including the team of horses. Everybody could see that this couple started off with a lot."

585 Instead of making arrangements, a man might simply send his daughter to become the wife of another man without forewarning him. The recipient of such a bride could not well refuse her and was supposed to act as though he were happy to have her, regardless of how many other wives he might have or his real feelings in the matter. He, too, would normally give some kind of present to her father, the amount depending somewhat on the previous reputation of the bride. On the one side, she might have been given merely to get her off her father's hands, on the other, she might have been highly desirable as a wife and her father would have taken this means to show generosity on his own part and to honor the husband he had selected.

583 Sometimes elopements occurred, but this was very rarely if ever the case, so far as the girl was concerned, until she had been given at least once in marriage arranged by her relatives. Should [684] a married woman run off with another man, it was up to her husband to deal with the situation. If, however, she had been widowed or divorced, and eloped before another marriage had been arranged, her relatives would be angry, but the affair could be patched up if the usual presents to them were forthcoming from the man.

591 There was no hard and fast rule in regard to residence. Matrilocal residence in the same lodge was incompatible with the observance of the mother-in-law taboo and it was said that if a man wished his son-in-law to remain with him, he provided the separate lodge and all the equipment.[7] The tendency seems to have been toward patrilocal residence in general, although it was not unusual for a couple to move back and forth. Coming Daylight lived most of her married life with her husband's people. As a child-bride she first lived in the lodge with her husband's parents; later on she and her husband went to her people, living with her

[7] Obligations between kin are discussed pp. 109–10. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180, states that a young married man often lived with his father-in-law.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

lodge at some little distance from the camp. As exceptions to the rule, however, Coming Daylight told of a couple of instances which came within her experience in the first epidemic which she remembers. One case concerned a man who simply left the body of one of his wives where she had fallen and Coming Daylight came across the bones of that woman stripped of flesh by wild animals during the night. The other case was that of a man who mercilessly covered with stones the body of his infected sister, in spite of the fact that she was still alive.

Only in relatively recent times has burial in the ground been common. This is illustrated by the comments of Coming Daylight in connection with a long story about a visit to a relative who was married to a white trader. "On this occasion my father's father was killed and scalped by the Piegan just outside of the white man's stockade. The white men brought in the body. He had been scalped and was bloody all over. These whites washed him, bound up his head, and dressed his body in their own clothes,—even to putting shoes on his feet. We thought that peculiar and some of our relatives wanted instead to put on him the best pair of beaded moccasins we had. My father said, however, that he wouldn't interfere as long as they were fixing him up in their way. So the whites buried him just like they do their own. The Gros Ventres never did that—they put the corpse up high somewhere, usually in a tree. We thought it was bad enough for our relatives to die, much less covering them up with earth. My maternal grandmother, who was there at the time, said: 'When I leave you, I don't want you to mourn for me because I have lived to be just as old as anyone should be. All I ask is that you see to it that I am fixed up the right way. Don't let them dig any hole for me. I want you to lay me up in a cliff in a nice quiet place, just make a bed for me and lay me there.' When she died, that is just what was done for her."

It was customary, prior to the time that the Gros Ventres settled down, to place some of the personal belongings of the deceased with the body.[6] When a beloved son died, for instance, his favorite horse might be taken along and killed at the place where the body was laid away. Similarly a minor pipe might have been

[6] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

I have always heard her say that she would never smoke, even if someone gave her a pinto pony.' But when my husband told her about my dream, she said: 'Oh. It is great to have a dream like that. Many of us fast and pray and we are never shown anything!' So she fixed a smoke for me and gave it to me. I have been smoking ever since."

Whenever close relatives happened to be in the vicinity where lay the remains of one of their number, some at least went there to cry. Coming Daylight remarked that she remembers well where each and every one of her relatives had been "left," and feels the country, over which the Gros Ventres had control in the 1860's and 1870's, to be "fenced in" by their remains.

At present when a Gros Ventre dies, no "feasting and smoking" is done for four days thereafter. If, however, an important date has been set and it is seriously inconvenient to postpone a big gathering, at least one of the chief mourners would be invited "too soon," and has no choice but to accept. Before eating, the host or someone in his place "talked" to the mourner and commanded him to cease mourning, to paint his face, and henceforth to join in all amusements, dances, and social affairs of the people.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

*796 they would all be in camp anyhow. Our informants made no mention of criers or police in connection with the Fly Dance.

Ordinarily the Fly Dance was supposed to be gone through first, before any of the other sacred dances, but there were exceptions, as in the case of Turn Toes who joined the Crazy Dance first when he was a young man and the Fly Dance only after he was an old man. Coming Daylight's husband, Little Man, never joined the Fly Dance.[26]

[561] [883] The Fly Dance was usually performed by youths, mostly young unmarried fellows of the age range of about 16 to 20 years as nearly as we could determine. With the chief vower would be associated in the dance all the members of his own age-group or company (e.g., all the "Potbellies"), and apparently no others. They would carry it out in a body.

No women joined the dance. But, according to Coming Daylight, if a woman's son was participating as a dancer "she might go way to be back of the tent [apparently the dance lodge] and dance just like her son was doing, not making fun."

*796 608 The Fly Dancers would choose their ceremonial grandfathers from among the older men. The young fellow wishing to join the dance would fill a pipe, go with it to an old timer, and offer it to him saying: "Here is the pipe. You will be my grandfather." If the old man accepted, he would instruct the candidate in all the rites and observances of the dance and would perform the other functions therein to be noted presently. At the last Fly Dance held [circa 1907] two young fellows, Mark Black Crow and Jerry Bear, came together to Coming Daylight's husband, Warrior, and offered him a pipe, which he accepted, thereby agreeing to act as their grandfather.[27] Cora Chandler's uncle, Sits-in-the-middle, had been "boss" of a Fly Dance which she had witnessed one Fourth of July when she was still of school age, probably this last one held.

*796 According to The Boy, the Fly Dance lasted only one day. As our informants had been eye-witnesses of this dance, it is probable

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[26] These exceptions occurred after the breakdown of the ceremonial cycle. [R.F.]

[27] In 1948 The Boy explained that in this Dance a group of boys—even more than four—could have the same ritual grandfather. [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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war, wealth, curing, gambling, and sex. The helper imparted no power of clairvoyance or prophecy; the other lesser beings did impart one or other of the specific powers above listed. The helper had to be summoned to come in person on each occasion when needed; the other beings gave power once for all to the receiver and were not, at least not ordinarily, summoned to come in person when the imparted power was exercised. The helper was always a deceased relative of the helped; the power-giver was a non-ancestral being. The helper was not acquired by quest, he more or less forced his services on the recipient, and was not transferable; personal power was commonly (although not always) acquired by quest, was accepted or refused freely, and was more commonly transferable.

Our chief sources of information upon personal ancestral helpers and personal supernatural powers were: among the men, The Boy, Thick, Al Chandler, Thomas Main, Turn Toes; among the women, Coming Daylight, Singer, Garter Snake, Mary Ereaux, Cora Chandler. Their competence will, we believe, become clear from the circumstances to be noted passim in the present section.

Ancestral Helpers

The ancestral helper complex among the Gros Ventres has been recorded in detail by us in two papers published in 1944,[1] to which the reader is referred. The following account is a summarized version of these two papers.

The ancestral or ghost helper was called tsätsuwa'a,[2] of uncertain etymology. The word was used exclusively for such ancestral helpers, as distinct from other ghosts (see p. 23).

Such a ghost helper was acquired, not by quest through fasting or crying, as power was more commonly acquired. Acquisition usually came about as follows. A man or woman would keep some momento of a deceased close relative, such as some prized possession or else a rib or tooth[3] or lock of hair of the deceased,—either in

[1] Flannery, 1944, pp. 54-59; Cooper, 1944, pp. 80-84.

[2] This same word is used by the Gros Ventres at present for "radio."

[3] After the body had decomposed. Formerly the Gros Ventres did not bury the dead in the ground, cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 211.

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4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
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SOCIAL MECHANISMS IN GROS VENTRE GAMBLING

REGINA FLANNERY AND JOHN M. COOPER

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT PAPER is offered as a modest start toward opening up what looks like a promising field, namely, the social implications of gambling.

Our anthropological sources yield a fairly generous amount of information on the world distribution of gambling,[1] the games and sports gambled on, the valuables wagered, the payment of gambling debts, and the ritual accompaniments of gambling. On the other hand, the same sources yield extremely meager information, and for most gambling peoples none at all, on such social aspects of gambling as: its mode of meshing into the prevalent social organization (who gambles, with whom, and for what); its effectiveness in fulfilling or thwarting the wishes of the individual gambler and in meeting or blocking the needs of integral and fractional social groups; individual differences in participation and the motivations responsible for them; native attitudes toward gambling; the economic and other factors that are favorable or unfavorable to the rise and persistence of gambling in culture as such or in given cultures. Field and library studies of these and most other social aspects of gambling have been almost entirely neglected by anthropologists.[2] And, so far as the present writers have been able to discover from rapid search among the sociological sources and from random inquiries among their sociological friends, such studies have also been almost entirely neglected by the sociologists, even by those specializing in the area of delinquency.

The following pages are an attempt to present the gambling complex, with emphasis on certain of its social aspects, as it existed during the second half of the last century among the Gros Ventre of Montana. Most of the complex is now a thing of the past. New gambling games, particularly playing cards, have superseded the old, and gambling itself, on the reservation and among the Gros Ventre in general, is not the tense and meaningful activity it used to be.

The data on which this paper is based were gathered, incidentally to a gen-

1 World distribution is spotty and far from universal. A summarized world distribution, based on several hundred sources, is given in J. M. Cooper, *Temporal Sequence and the Marginal Cultures* (Anthropological Series, Catholic University of America, no. 10, 1941), pp. 67-68.

2 Father Gerald Desmond's *Gambling among the Yakima*, from his field study of 1944, a manuscript now being prepared for publication, is devoted largely to the social aspects.

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525 Women (and men?) also gambled at ring-and-pin, the "ring" being made of four bones from deer feet.[4] The contest was mostly just for fun; the losers would have to "cook" for the winners.

Several types of bow and arrow contests, serving as archery practice as well as gambling sports, were indulged in by boys, young men, and sometimes older men, not, however, by girls or women. Both distance and accuracy contests occurred. In the latter, the target was a stick or arrow stuck upright in a small mound, or an arrow shot by one contestant a desired distance, say, 100 or 150 yards. In another kind of contest, a bow was set slanting, string upward; the string was vibrated by an arrow and the arrow on release flew toward the target about 35 or 40 feet away. In these bow and arrow contests, the wagers were small, usually arrows, sometimes a bow. Wagers were made by the players, and at times by onlookers too.

The modern 4-button hand game, distinct from the earlier 2-button one, is played more for fun than for winnings. At most the losers may be expected to [177] "cook" for the winners. This modern non-gambling hand game came to the Gros Ventre through an Arapaho, Dances All Night, in 1897, shortly after the [68] time the Ghost Dance was introduced among them (in 1891). The Ghost Dance itself had little popularity among the Gros Ventre and after a couple of years died out among them, but the non-gambling hand game took root and survived. At first, we were informed, it was played with two buttons, but after 1903 with four.

525 Gambling at playing cards, sometimes for large stakes, occurs today, but 178 usually at the nearby white settlements, between Gros Ventre and white males. Some of the older Gros Ventre are shrewd poker players, and the younger ones play poker among themselves, but we obtained no record of ruinous stakes at cards among the Gros Ventre themselves on the reservation.

Major Gambling Games and Sports

525 The three more important gambling games and sports of half a century or more ago were races, the wheel game, and the 2-button hand game.

1. *Races*

[575] On horse races, usually between the two soldier-police societies, the Stars and Wolves (the latter became later the "Grass Dancers"), or between the [68] Gros Ventre and other tribes, such as the Piegan, at intertribal gatherings, were placed large bets—horses, saddles, and so forth—by the men, not however by

4 Illustration in Culin, *op. cit.*, fig. 706, p. 537.

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left, although we still have reports of a hand game between the Gros Ventre and the Flathead, staged at Glacier Park, Montana, as late as 1922, in which Joe Assiniboine represented the Gros Ventre. Today neither the wheel game nor the 2-button hand game is played. 525 182

Hard times, for a short period near-famine conditions, prevailed for a while after 1884; an economy of abundance gave place to an economy of scarcity. While a world survey of gambling reveals, so far as we can discern, no significant correlation between gambling and abundance or scarcity economies, extreme and sudden economic shock and shift, such as occurred among the Gros Ventre in the years immediately following 1884, may well have slowed up the gambling pace. [735]

Around 1897 the non-gambling hand game was introduced, won favor, and persists down to the present. Today there is little gambling among the Gros Ventre on the reservation. Most of what occurs among them takes place off the reservation, at nearby white villages and towns, in the form of poker or other card games for money, between Gros Ventre and whites. [177] [178]

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796 Such was the form of the Grass dance as carried out by the Gros Ventres from the time of its adoption from the Assiniboine up to about 1890 when changes began creeping in.

The Form: Later Period

796 178 It should perhaps be emphasized at this point that the changes which characterized the Grass dance after 1890 were mostly in the nature of accretions around the nucleus as originally adopted, so that, although in 1901 the form of the Grass dance differed somewhat from the earlier form, as Kroeber noted,[13] the whole was still distinctly recognizable as an expansion thereof.

Changes in personnel and equipment. At the turn of the century participation in the Grass dance was no longer restricted to members of a particular society. Everybody was free to join in. The Grass dance was, however, in charge of four officials, the "chiefs" who sat in the place of honor opposite the door and presided over the ceremony (Fig. 1). They were consulted on any matters pertaining to the performance, made rules, sometimes arbitrarily, during the dance, and were custodians of any fines collected. They were responsible for seeing to it that provisions were on hand when a dance was to be held. There were, moreover, two women officials, whose rank was said to be equal to that of the "chiefs" and whose insignia were ceremonial dresses of black cloth. These two sat to the right of the four chiefs.

[625] The orders of the "chiefs" were enforced by two men who sat, one on either side of the door, holding whips with ornamental handles. These whips were apparently a simple substitution for the wands representing swords in the original Grass dance. The whip owners each had an assistant who ran errands and attended to getting water, keeping up the fire and so on. An entirely new feature was, however, the addition of two women who owned whips and their two female assistants. They likewise sat on each side of the door but behind the men. When it was time for the women to dance,—another innovation to which we shall refer later,—the women whip owners rose and danced in opposite di-

[13] Kroeber, A. L., Ethnology of the Gros Ventre, AMNH-AP 1, pt. 4, 1908, p. 238.

rections around the circle. It was understood that if any woman had not risen to dance by the time those holding whips reached her, she would be lashed. These four women had the additional duty of helping serve when it was time for the general feast.

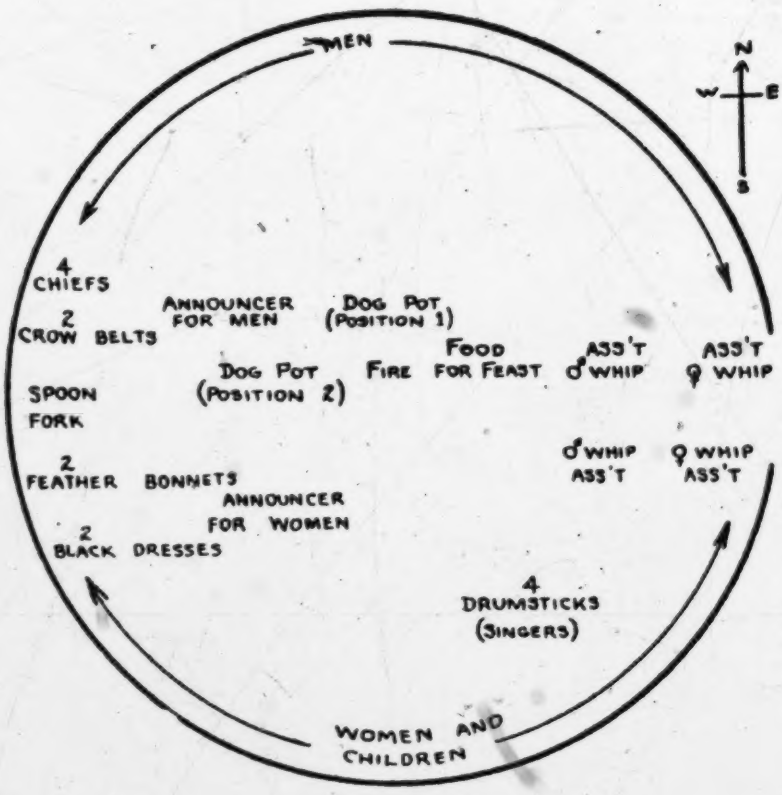

Fig. 1. Diagram of Dance Ground.

Considered as next in rank to the four "chiefs" were the four male singers, who, as in former times, owned the special drumsticks "decorated and official-looking, like emblems." They were expected to know faultlessly all of the many songs connected with the Grass dance as first adopted. If they should, for instance,

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796 178 [688] sing a song out of the prescribed order, the "chiefs" would stop them at once, announce the mistake and what fine was to be demanded of the singers. Were the four women singers performing at that time, they too were penalized.

[534] The owners of the drumsticks cooperated with the owner of the drum whose special duty it was to care for this instrument and to have it in repair and ready for use at any time it was needed.

The concepts pertaining to the crow-belts, spoon, fork and whistle remained unchanged. The owners of these regalia treated them with the same respect as of old. Additional ceremonial equipment had been introduced in the form of four feathered war-bonnets, two of which were owned by men and two by women. There was a special little ceremony connected with the two bonnets owned by women. Early in the dance two outstanding warriors were selected to take these bonnets from their owners, dance four times around the rack where they were hung in front of their owners, and then hand them to the first two women sitting at the left of the door. When it was time to dance these women would don them and wear them throughout that dance, then pass them on to the next two, and so on, until everyone had had a chance to wear them.

796 178 624 Finally, there were two announcers, one who called out what he was directed to say by any of the men, and the other who publicized any statement to be made on behalf of the women.

All of these individuals were considered as office-holders in the Grass dance and, as formerly, each was free to transfer the office [622] to anyone he considered suitable to succeed himself. There was no regular term of office even for the "chiefs" and the transfer was described as purely voluntary. Apparently, however, there was a certain amount of consultation among the officers, when one of them decided to transfer his office, in order to agree on a well-qualified successor. Among other things it was necessary to consider the financial status of the individual, especially for those to take over the higher offices. Not only did the recipient heap property upon the donor, but according to the older pattern too, [431] the relatives of the recipient would give away horses and so on

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in his honor, and there were certain obligations connected with some of the offices in the newer form of the Grass dance, such as payment for the privilege by the black-dress wearers of being invited to come near the fire in the center and eat dog flesh. Furthermore a new "chief" would almost without exception provide the wherewithal for a whole dance to show that he was worthy of the office.

The procedure of transfer was similar for each office. If, for instance, one of the four "chiefs" had decided he had held this position long enough, at one of the dances he would order the transferring song to be sung. He, together, with the other three, would rise and dance around more or less deliberately and in a dignified manner. When these four reached the man who was to receive the office, each of the other three would make a motion toward the recipient as though helping him to his feet, while the donor himself would actually take his hand and assist him to arise. They then led him around the dancing place and finally installed the new officer in the place of honor vacated by the donor. It was customary, as the donor approached the region where the recipient was sitting, for everyone in the vicinity to bow his head as though making himself inconspicuous. None of them was supposed to know ahead of time on whom the choice would fall and, according to Gros Ventre etiquette, it would be very bad form for anyone to seem eager to receive an office, or any kind of honor for that matter.

Changes in procedure. In this later period the Grass dance was held sometimes out of doors in a circular space enclosed by wagons, at other times in a large log building, the ground plan of which was as nearly round as it could be made. It was remarked in this connection that the modern rectangular community hall at Hays, on the Reservation, was no good for Gros Ventre ceremonies, including the Grass dance, "because everything we did was in a circle." The present almost circular community hall at Lodge Pole is considered much more satisfactory. The seating arrangements were very similar to those described for

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796 the original Grass dance, the number participating, however, both
178 as officers and as general audience, being very much larger.

Although the dog ritual, carried out as described for the earlier period, remained the highlight and climax of the Grass dance, the general program had been enlarged to include other features. Not only were procedures introduced in connection with the newer offices, as indicated above, but other items such as the Owl dance and the Ringtail dance were introduced. The order of events was apparently determined by the "chiefs" at each performance of the Grass dance, but the general program did not vary markedly. The Ringtail dance, for instance, was always included at some time.

When the order for the Ringtail dance was given, any who wished to participate formed a circle facing inward and both men and women were free to choose partners of the opposite sex. The man placed his arm over the shoulders of his partner while she placed her arm around his back. The whole group moved in a circle clockwise in rhythm to the music provided by a group of singers other than those who sang and drummed for the dog ritual and other ceremonies in which officers as such participated.
[887] Any middle-aged or older woman who wished to do so might join the singers for any of the round dances. If none volunteered then they were sometimes drafted simply by being invited and led over to the spot where the male singers were performing.

796 It occasionally happened that during this dance, when the sing-
533 ers had "hit the spot,"—aroused the spirit of the crowd and the
178 floor was full,—the singers would stop all of a sudden, but without giving the usual signal to disperse. Then, without advance notice, they would start singing again, but a different song, a "punishing song." This was a feature obviously based on the "punishing songs" of the original Grass dance, but the tunes were different and it was carried out in the following way.

There were only two of these newer "punishing songs" but as soon as the dancers heard the singers start one of them they knew what it meant: "Now we are in for it. We will have to dance and dance!" The singers could sing the first of these

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songs as many times as they pleased, and when tired of that one switched to the others. There was no intermission and the dancers got no rest, even the old women would stand up and dance in one place and the old men would be yelling and calling out from where they sat. It was evidently a very lively scene. The dancers would sweat and get tired, but still there would be no let up. Finally the four wearers of the feathered war bonnets, —two men and two women,—would begin voicing appeals to the four "chiefs": "Please do something to stop this dance!" But the "chiefs" did not act right away. At last one of them would get up and walk around until he approached the wearer of a war-bonnet. He would then remove the bonnet and the people were glad and would cheer and yell, but this was not yet the end. They kept on dancing until a second of the "chiefs" got up and removed a war-bonnet from another of the wearers, which finally brought the Ringtail dance to a close.

It was said that while the women who wore black dresses could have answered the appeal to stop the dance, as a rule they would have hesitated to do so because the ones who took upon themselves this privilege would have to pay heavily for it. When the people had quieted down after the strenuous dance, those who had removed the war-bonnets would get up and announce what they were paying for having done so. One might have said, for instance: "All right. I will kill a beef for the next dance," or "I will give money" and name the sum. He could donate whatever he wished, but it was understood that it would be something really substantial. My informants explained that although the Ringtail dance was a regular feature of the Grass dance program, the "punishing songs" were not sung every time because "the reason for singing them was that the people hoped to have a Grass dance again soon and wanted an elaborate affair and so the singers had to use discretion; if the 'chiefs' happened to be in a good financial condition at the time, they made them 'shell out' in that way."

The owners of the ceremonial drumsticks retained the smoking song as described for the earlier period. It was the "chiefs" who

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796 178 533 [625 681] were supposed to come prepared with pipe, tobacco, and matches in anticipation of this song. If, for some reason, one of the four was unable to furnish at least a pipeful of mixture, and could not borrow one, he was immediately arrested by the owners of the whips and punished by the singers who might tear his shirt at the neck so everyone could see it, or, perhaps, pour over him a good cupful of broth made from dog flesh. This broth has a strong and lasting odor. The female officers were likewise expected to give the women singers a smoke. The smoking song marked an intermission. No one danced to this song and all sat around smoking and taking it easy.

796 178 If things got too dull, however, one of the owners of the whips might get up, call the announcer, and say: "Tell my friends that I am going to whip them if they don't dance. I will have the right to whip them because I am going to pay for it," and he would present a bridle, or perhaps five dollars, or something of that order of magnitude, to anyone he wished. It was understood, then, that the next time the singing started this man might hit any person,—even one of the "chiefs,"—who failed to dance.

Another feature reminiscent of the original Grass dance but showing some slight change, was the provision that anyone who wished might have it announced that he was going to "lock the door," which meant that nobody could go home until the dance was over. For doing this however he had to provide all the necessary food for another Grass dance to be held on the night immediately following. It was up to the owners of the whips to enforce the regulation by taking something valuable, say a hat [689] or a blanket, from anyone who left the dance and the article was forfeit if he failed to return.

796 178 626 Based on the same concept, the practice grew up of forcing attendance in the following way. Once in a while the owners of the whips might order their assistants to go from door to door in the whole community and take something belonging to each householder, say a bridle, or a valuable belt, or a gun, and bring it to the dancing-place. If the owner of the object were not at the dance, his property was returned to him only if he promised

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to provide food for the next dance. If he failed to redeem it by such promise, he had one more chance to do so by appearing at the following dance. If he did not show up on that occasion the announcer was told to call out: "The one who owns this bridle (or belt, or gun, etc.) does not want it." Whereupon the article would be thrown in the fire and destroyed.

Although the custom of "throwing away" wives gradually died out, the giving away of valuable property to honor loved ones continued and was elaborated. The following is only one example from many which might be cited as illustrative of attitudes. The informant is now a man in his early seventies. He stated: "When I was a young man I never went to these social affairs. After I married my wife would go with my older brother every time there was a Grass dance, but I would stay at home. This brother of mine used to get after me for not taking part. He would say: 'It is bad to be the way you are. When there is a dance or anything going on, go and look on. You don't necessarily have to dance, but at least be present.' One time in later years the Cheyenne came to visit and of course the Gros Ventres put on a dance for them. I decided to go and for the first time I joined in. When my brother saw me he got up and said: 'Well, my friends, I have been asking my brother to look on and to take part in these dances, and I have never succeeded. But today I see him at this dance and I am glad he is here. I am glad he is joining with us.' Then my brother went out and brought to the dancing-place a new yellow-wheeled buggy and a set of harness he had just purchased, and announced: 'Now, because my brother has joined the dance I am proud he did, and in his honor I am giving away this buggy and harness to the visitors.' Then my brother's wife announced: 'I am happy that my brother-in-law is joining the dance. I will give a beef to the visitors so they will kill it and have meat to eat.' Of course I felt embarrassed. It was hard on me because I thought everybody was looking at me and I sweated. Afterwards I told my brother: 'I didn't go in there for the purpose of having you give away all that stuff in my honor!' But he replied: 'Well, that is the way of our people

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formance of the Grass dance, but that he was also paying for this by cancelling debts owed him at his store by four specific individuals whom he named; that anyone who objected to the children having the privilege would have to raise the ante; and that finally he would inaugurate this new feature of the Grass dance by having all of his own children dance first. No one disputed the point, and from that day to this children have had the freedom of the floor at any of the social gatherings.

The innovation described above was probably one of the last changes made in the form of the Grass dance before it began to disintegrate about 1916. Once the dog ritual was abandoned,—seemingly just prior to 1920,—the Grass dance as such disappeared, leaving only the round dances, one or two of which survive today and are performed at annual fairs, at celebrations of the Fourth of July, and so on.

Let us now turn to a consideration of the functions of the Grass dance in Gros Ventre culture in each of the two periods.

Functions

Earlier period. When the Grass dance was first adopted by the Gros Ventres its function was a relatively minor one of replacing the dance belonging to one of the two "soldier" societies, the Wolves, or Wolf-men as the members were called. The members of the parallel society were known as Stars. These two societies were approximately equal numerically and included between them the whole Gros Ventres population of able-bodied warriors. At the age of 18 or 19 the individual Gros Ventre young man who, together with say 30-50 of his age-mates, already belonged to one of several "companies"—the Rosebushes, or Calves, or Resting-on-the-breast-of-a-woman, or Holding-dogs'-tails, and so forth,—would enter either the Wolf society or the Star society, whichever one was selected by the "company." The individual would then be either a Wolf-dancer or a Star-dancer, although he retained close personal association with the members of his "company" which would have entered one society or the other as a body. With the mates of his "company" he would then go through the

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others to the left forming a circle inside the dancing-place where they sat. The two prominent warriors, having been assisted in dismounting, took up their places, one on each side of the entrance, holding whips in their hands. It was their duty to rouse any lagging dancers, whipping them if necessary. Each member had his own rattle, of peculiar shape but painted with individual designs, which he waved about as he danced. The wives of some of the dancers joined the four singers in singing certain of the dance songs. Two of the youngest members acted as *atsa'an* (waiters) tending to the fire, getting water, and so on. Occasionally during the dance a woman relative of one of the participants would rush up to him, throw down a blanket or some other gift in his honor, grab his rattle and dance for a short time. Members of the other society did not join in the festivities or partake of the feast, in spite of the fact that most of the provisions for the latter had been donated by some of them.

At some future date, however, the Wolf-men would agree that the time was auspicious for them to have a dance and "get even" with the Stars. They would of course have their own songs, sung in front of the lodges of prominent members of the Star society, but otherwise the procedure was identical, including their accompaniment by two outstanding warriors, the "snake-dance," the arrangement of the lodge in the center of the camp-circle, and so on. The Wolf-men differed from the Stars in their actual dance in that they did not have rattles and in dancing seemingly intended to portray wolves, placing one hand on the forehead and the other at the back to represent the animal's tail.[14]

The adoption of the Grass dance meant merely that the more elaborate dog ritual, with its regalia and greater degree of organization, replaced the dance of the Wolf-men although the begging preliminary and so on remained the same. So far as we can see, at the time of its adoption, the Grass dance was a case of pure substitution and one that fitted readily into the cultural situation. First of all, according to Lowie's information, the Assini-

[14] I am deeply grateful to my colleague, John M. Cooper, who generously placed at my disposal his field notes on the Wolf society.

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796 boine themselves considered the Grass dance as a modern form
575 of one of their own older soldier society dances.[15] Secondly there
178 were certain similarities between the original Star and Wolf dances on the one hand and the Grass dance on the other. In both types there was dancing to exhaustion and the employment of special officers to rouse the laggards,—the whip men in the first instance, the sword men in the other. Again women singers helped out occasionally in both. Still another feature in common was the custom of giving presents away, not to a relative who was a member, but in honor of that relative. Thus, the Grass dance became a part of Gros Ventres culture.

182 So long as Gros Ventre culture continued on its traditional eco-
178 nomic basis, the hunting of buffalo, the Grass dance fulfilled its function as the dance of the Wolf soldier society and was simply parallel to the dance of the rival Star society. The disappearance of the buffalo, however, wrought many changes in Gros Ventre life as it did in that of all of the Plains tribes. The Gros Ventres were fortunate in that the last large herd of buffalo happened to be in their hunting territory and thus they could benefit a little longer than most of their neighbors from this mainstay of their old way of life. This is not to say that prior to the extinction of the buffalo Gros Ventre culture was flourishing in pristine glory. Far from it. For one thing, at the time of the adoption of the
[[77]] Grass dance between 1875 and 1880, intertribal warfare, with which many aspects of their culture were interrelated, was at a minimum and was itself soon to disappear. Again, certain aspects of their ceremonial life had fallen into disuse, some of the Sacred Dances not having been given for years previously. Nevertheless, although the religious culture was dwindling, much was still left and the social side was relatively intact.

182 *Later period.* The break in economic life with the killing of
796 the last of the buffalo in 1884 was accompanied by the virtual disappearance of the Gros Ventre ceremonial organization. The public rites of a religious nature, which had formerly made for social solidarity as well, were abandoned. The last Sacrifice

[15] Lowie, loc. cit. p. 66.

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796 new lodge, certain practices in connection with the Flat Pipe, as well as in the dog ritual of the Grass dance. All in all the Grass dance was so much more colorful that, with choice left strictly to the individual, as it was after the "companies" were no longer formed, it seems probable that greater and greater numbers elected to join the Grass dancers. In time the Star society consequently lacked sufficient recruits to maintain its identity.

796 178 The addition of the round dances, such as the Ringtail, around the dog ritual nucleus, allowed all to actively participate. In this way the Grass dance provided occasion for group recreational outlets, while at the same time fulfilling another function formerly carried out by the public religious rites, namely, that of enhancing the feeling of social solidarity. One aspect of the public religious rites had been a nice balance in their performance between periods of ritual solemnity and those of secular gaiety and relaxation. The Grass dance now approximated this situation to some degree in the reserve which the audience maintained during the performance of the ceremonial parts of the dog ritual, and the verve with which it entered into the other parts of the program, especially the round dances. If one may judge from the enthusiasm expressed by informants who knew the Grass dance between 1900 and 1916, it was a most stimulating and enjoyable affair. Each performance drew in a large proportion of the tribe, even those from the far corners of the Reservation.

In spite of its ceremonial features, the Grass dance was always looked upon as social rather than religious, and it could be given at any time. It thus became the accepted manner of entertaining the frequent visitors from other tribes and furthermore was eminently adapted to form the central part of Fourth of July celebrations and the like. [574]

We have seen that in its later phase the Grass dance became more highly organized with the addition of new offices and a few new items of equipment. The expansion of offices meant retaining and underlining the recognition of types of ability formerly premiated while allowing for shifting emphases to different types of ability.

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The addition of the four "chiefs" of the Grass dance gave scope for public recognition of the middle-aged men of substance esteemed for their wisdom and judgment to whom office-holding proportionate for their dignity was otherwise denied. Although there was no longer opportunity for the ranks of warriors to swell, those who had in the past performed brave deeds could still gain status by being called upon to publicly recount them at the ceremonial eating of dog flesh and by being selected to handle the feathered bonnets.

As the younger men had no chance to show their prowess in warfare and hunting, there was a change of emphasis to recognition of superior singing and dancing ability as one of the roads to public approval. This latter was brought out clearly by our informants when explaining the qualifications of those sought for the various officers of the Grass dance as it was performed around the turn of the century.

They stated that much of the success of the performance of the Grass dance depended particularly on the singers of the dog ritual songs. The four singers who owned the ceremonial drumsticks were chosen for their good voices and from among the "lively men who liked to do things." The candidates did not have to know the songs in advance because they could be trained. Two noted teachers were The Boy and Joe Big Beaver. The Boy said he used to "campaign against himself" when it was time for a drumstick to be transferred because "he didn't want to get tied down. He enjoyed dancing and the singers never got a chance to participate." Our informants told us of two men who are remembered especially as being outstanding singers and drummers, Ed Rider and Breath. The latter was described as a top-ranking singer who, so far as they knew, had never been surpassed. They said: "It was something worth listening to when Breath started those Grass dance songs. He had a voice adapted to that kind of singing and his sense of rhythm was superb. He could hold a big crowd of people spellbound. He was a real genius. Many others tried to copy him and learn from him, but none ever succeeded in equalling him. Regardless of his fine voice no one

796 even acquired his technique for beating the drum, that is, of be-
178 ginning lightly and then, in an inimitable manner, of increasing
555 the volume. Sometimes the other three singers would let him begin a song and sing it through once just to listen to him. He was left-handed, but he sure could beat the drum! He was a man of whom you could say he had a real personality as far as the Grass dance was concerned but who was not so noticeable outside this one field. He was always deliberate but as soon as he approached the dancing-place he seemed to come alive. He was good at that office in the Grass dance and he knew it. He would sit up at the drum as straight as a lord and never attempted to be inconspicuous as, for instance, by putting his hat down over his eyes. Many of the young fellows who usually didn't join in the dancing and liked to play around on the outside would nevertheless rush from every direction to get to the floor when they saw him coming."

796 While singing had always held an important place in Gros Ventre religious culture, in the past the emphasis had been on the meaning of the song far more than on the quality of the voice and the manner of performing as it was in the Grass dance. Similarly in times gone by what dancing there was in the various rites was more or less perfunctory, whereas in the Grass dance the ownership of the two crow-belts, the fork, the spoon, and the whistle was transferred to those among the younger men who had
554 physical vigor and endurance as well as grace. For these offices "it took a good-looking young man in good physical condition to perform properly."

796 A still greater innovation was the inclusion of women as officers
178 of the Grass dance. The two ceremonial black dresses were
562 seemingly symbolic of the black paint used in the Victory dance of former years, especially in view of the fact that this was one of the few dances performed by women in the old culture. It should be mentioned, however, that in connection with the Victory dance there had been no formal office nor had the participants therein been under economic obligations. We might hazard the guess that the ownership by women of two of the war-bonnets in

7: Flannery E-5 (1940, 1945) 1947
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the Grass dance may have seemed appropriate to the Gros Ventres as reminiscent of the feather headdress worn by the participants in the Women's Dance belonging to the series of vowed Sacred Dances. But regardless of the possible symbolism, these four offices, plus the four others allotted to women,—two whip owners and their two assistants,—gave the female sex a fair degree of recognition, and probably reflect the newer economic status of women which came about with the changing concept of inheritance. Formerly women, of course, had a right to their own property, but acquisition thereof was mainly through their own manufacture, such as clothing, or through the relatively rare gift of a horse or so. They did not come in for any valuable property through inheritance and a widow in those days was not even entitled to any of her deceased husband's belongings.

The holding of office in the Grass dance thus offered one of the very few means remaining for acquisition of status by the individual. The frequent transfer of offices meant that there was opportunity for many individuals within each category,—mature men, older warriors, young men, women,—to enjoy such public recognition.

Public display of generosity in giving away property to honor a loved one, which became such a marked feature of the Grass dance in its later phase, carried on and accentuated the method most common in older Gros Ventre culture for the gaining of individual prestige. Formerly there were many opportunities for this kind of ostentatious liberality,—when a pipe or a painted lodge was transferred, when a warrior returned from accomplishing brave deeds, when a person was participating in one of the Sacred Dances, when a person was named, when a child's ears were pierced, and so on. At such times the relatives publicly gave away as much of their property as they possibly could,—not to the recipient of the pipe, the brave warrior, the participant in the Sacred Dance, et al.,—but to someone else in his honor. Everybody would know what was given and by whom; people would make such comments as: "So-and-so is a fine man. He surely must think a lot of his relative—look at all the things he

gave away in his honor." When first adopted the Grass dance offered only one such opportunity—and a relatively minor one. As times changed, however, the Grass dance provided practically the sole occasion for gaining prestige while at the same time carrying out the old pattern of kinship obligation by enhancing the prestige of relatives.

The possibility in the later form of the Grass dance of paying for privileges, such as locking the door, or whipping those who did not get up to dance, gave further scope for the acquisition of prestige through liberality, as did also, of course, payments at transfer of office.

It was estimated by our informants that around 1900 as much as a thousand dollars in goods and cash changed hands at a single performance of the Grass dance. At that time it was not uncommon for the dance to be held at weekly intervals. So long as the Gros Ventre were relatively prosperous and had property to display and exchange according to the older patterns, the Grass dance continued to function. With increasing poverty, however, along with other factors such as the changing points of view and interests on the part of the younger generation, and the dying out of the older warriors, the Grass dance, the core of which was the dog ritual, gradually paled off leaving but the remnants of some of the round dances which had been added to the Grass dance as originally adopted from the Assiniboine.

Summary

Between 1875 and 1880 the Gros Ventres received the Grass dance from the Assiniboine. From the date of adoption up to about 1890 the Grass dance was performed only by members of one of the two soldier societies and the custodians of the ceremonial equipment were the officers. Offices were transferred among members according to the old Gros Ventre pattern.

The essential core of the Grass dance was the dog ritual, a ceremonial eating of dog flesh, carried out by the owners of the equipment with the assistance of four warriors selected from among the lay members. Other features of the program at each

7: Flannery E-5 (1940, 1945) 1947
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Other features of the program at each performance of the Grass dance included the "punishing" dance, the smoking song, the forfeiture of property, the "throwing away" of property represented by sticks, gift-giving in honor of loved ones. 796 [533 431]

In 1890 changes in the form of the Grass dance began to be noticeable. By 1900 the Grass dance included all in the tribe who wished to participate. The official personnel had been expanded to include four "chiefs," four war-bonnet owners, two owners of ceremonial black dresses, two women whip-owners and two female assistants. Transfer of all offices was, however, carried out as before. 796 178

The dog ritual continued unchanged to be the highlight of the program. Perhaps the most obvious change in procedure was the inclusion of round dances, especially the Ringtail dance, in which both men and women participated and for which "punishing" songs had been devised. The smoking song and the forfeiture of property were retained, but with some elaborations. Although the "throwing away" of property gradually disappeared, the gift-giving in honor of relatives was very much emphasized. Other very minor changes were inaugurated at intervals up until about 1916. [533]

The changing functions of the Grass dance coincide with the changing form and can likewise be considered as of two periods, —the first from 1875–80 to 1890; the second from 1890 to 1916.

In the first period the function of the Grass dance was a relatively minor one. It was adopted, and fitted into place, as a substitute for the simpler and less colorful dance of the Wolf soldier society, and paralleled the dance of the other soldier society, the Star society. In view especially of the preliminary "begging" songs, the Grass dance seemingly was the expression of but one phase of the intense rivalry between the two soldier societies. [575]

With the extinction of the buffalo in 1884 came the breakdown of the older culture. By 1890 not only had most of the public religious rites disappeared, but the social organization was greatly altered. As the economic basis was changed, the nomadic life and the camp circle were abandoned, and the two soldier societies no [182]

796 longer existed. The dance of one of them, the Grass dance, how-
178 ever, survived. In its changed form the Grass dance filled the void in social life during the transition from old to new.

With the admission of all to membership and through the addition of round dances in which all could actively participate, the Grass dance met the needs for group recreational outlets and for expression of social solidarity.

796 As the sole surviving institution which carried the concept of
178 graded offices and their transfer, the Grass dance met the need of
554 the individual for status along traditional lines. The expansion of offices allowed for the recognition of types of ability formerly premiated and opened the way for younger men as well as for women in emphasizing different kinds of ability.

Finally, the Grass dance met the need of the individual for prestige in accordance with the older pattern by offering opportunity for ostentatious liberality. By bestowing gifts publicly
[431] at the Grass dance, one could gain the coveted reputation for generosity, while at the same time fulfilling a substantial part of one's obligation to kinsmen.

796 The Grass dance continued to function in this way up to about
182 1916, after which time it began gradually to pale off, and to practically disappear by 1920. The few round dances carried on at present under the name "Grass dance" bear no appreciable relationship to the lively and colorful performances that are remembered by the older Gros Ventres as having been so stimulating and enjoyable.